

VZCZCXRO4211  
OO RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV RUEHSR  
DE RUEHPS #0046/01 0291658  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
O 291658Z JAN 08  
FM USOFFICE PRISTINA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7950  
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 1000  
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK PRIORITY  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1392  
RHFMISS/AFSOUTH NAPLES IT PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/CDR TF FALCON PRIORITY  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEPGEA/CDR650THMIGP SHAPE BE PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUFOANA/USNIC PRISTINA SR PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PRISTINA 000046

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR DRL, INL, EUR/SCE  
NSC FOR BRAUN  
USUN FOR DREW SCHUFLETOWSKI

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/28/2018  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [SOCI](#) [KV](#) [UNMIK](#)  
SUBJECT: KOSOVO: BELGRADE AND NORTHERN HARDLINERS RATCHET  
UP THE PRESSURE

Classified By: COM Tina S. Kaidanow for reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY. Indications are growing that Belgrade and the hard-line Kosovo Serb leadership in the north are increasing the pace of plans to expand and strengthen parallel government structures for Kosovo Serbs in the event of Kosovo's independence. Although UNMIK appointed Serbs to the municipal assemblies of the mixed southern municipalities of Novo Brdo and Strpce after the Belgrade-ordered boycott of the November 17 elections, most of the appointees have yet to take their seats. There is strong evidence that pressure from Belgrade is the primary reason. Serbian Minister for Kosovo Slobodan Samardzic, visiting several southern Serb enclaves in Kosovo on January 18, pressured Serb politicians from both Novo Brdo and Strpce to form parallel governments which would remain separate from UNMIK or the Kosovo government. In addition, on January 21, the E.O.-listed Milan Ivanovic, leader of the hard-line Serb National Council (SNC) in the Serb-majority north, said in blunt terms that existing parallel structures would be "cemented" and that any future EU-led mission in northern Kosovo would be met with resistance "by all possible means." Though not surprising, these developments are troubling and potentially foreshadow even more provocative actions the Ministry for Kosovo could take when Kosovo becomes independent. END SUMMARY.

Problems remain in Strpce and Novo Brdo

12. (C) Following the near-total Kosovo Serb boycott of the November 17 elections, SRSR Ruecker appointed a majority of Serbs to the assemblies of the mixed municipalities of Strpce and Novo Brdo, in an attempt to maintain Serb participation in local government. In Novo Brdo, due to the almost even demographic split between Serbs and Albanians, Ruecker allowed the top Albanian vote-getter to take office as mayor, displacing moderate Serb mayor Petar Vasic. In Strpce, Serbs comprise a clear majority of the population, and based on this fact, Ruecker re-appointed sitting mayor Stanko Jakovljevic.

13. (C) Despite these appointments, a majority of Kosovo Serb municipal assembly members in Strpce have yet to take the

oath of office and assume their duties, and the 10 Serb members in Novo Brdo have, thus far, completely boycotted the assembly. The deadline for taking office was January 18th.

Samardzic comes calling

14. (C) While internal Serb political squabbling has in some instances contributed to delays in their taking up positions in local government, it is equally clear that increasing pressure from Belgrade could well keep Serbs out of local government entirely. On January 18, Serbian Minister for Kosovo Slobodan Samardzic, accompanied by the Minister for Energy Aleksandar Popovic, visited several southern Serb enclaves. In addition to opening new Serbian government-funded facilities in Ranilug and Vrbovac, Samardzic met former Novo Brdo mayor Vasic during his visit to Ranilug. Vasic told International Civilian Office Preparation Team (ICOPT) staffer and local Kosovo Serb Sasa Stamenkovic (a former employee of his) that Samardzic told him that he (Samardzic) would soon ask the SRSG to remove all Albanian officials from the Novo Brdo municipal building, since it was built with CCK funds. If the SRSG refused, Samardzic indicated he would instruct all Serbs working in the municipal administration to leave and form a parallel government only for Serb residents of the municipality, and that current Serb municipal employees would forego their PISG salaries and be added to the CCK payroll. (Note: Perhaps feeling pressured by Samardzic's actions, Vasic entered the Novo Brdo municipal building on January 24, proclaiming to the Kosovo Albanian mayor that he was now "the president of the municipality for the Kosovo Serb community." The mayor took no action and Vasic did not return the next day. End Note.)

PRISTINA 00000046 002 OF 003

15. (C) In Strpce, Samardzic and Popovic met a large number of CCK coordinators from across Kosovo and members of Serbian Prime Minister Kostunica's DSS party, of which both ministers are members. UNMIK sources told us that after local residents complained about Jakovljevic (who also serves as Strpce CCK coordinator), alleging that he was corrupt and that he had misused funds, Samardzic took the floor. Samardzic first said that "it was a huge and unforgivable mistake" for any Serbs to have participated in the November 17 elections, and then went on to say that as far as the Serbian government is concerned, the election results were null and void. Samardzic and Popovic then interrogated Jakovljevic, who was present, demanding that he explain why he had taken the oath of office, which assumes allegiance to UNMIK. Jakovljevic attempted to avoid the question, but after being pressed further, he said that Goran Bogdanovic (a former Kosovo MP and member of Serbian President Boris Tadic's DS party) had consulted Tadic and subsequently told Jakovljevic to go ahead and take the oath of office, a message that the latter then passed on to other Kosovo Serb municipal officials. Samardzic, who received applause from the audience, heatedly responded that "I am the first, last, and ultimate authority for Kosovo. No decision can be handed down to you by any party official because I am the ultimate authority. I am the Minister for Kosovo and Metohija and you should strictly abide by my orders."

16. (C) Samardzic went on to emphasize that all Serb municipal officials who recently pledged allegiance to SRSG Ruecker and the PISG had "behaved badly." He then repeated his earlier message to Vasic, saying that all Kosovo Serbs on PISG payrolls would be ordered to withdraw from UNMIK/PISG structures and placed on the Ministry for Kosovo payroll. (Comment: This would, in effect, mean that Belgrade would dismiss Serb municipal officials in Novo Brdo and Strpce and then replace them with its own appointees. End Comment.) Samardzic closed by saying that the Serbian government would hold its own municipal elections in all Serb-inhabited areas throughout Kosovo in May.

## CCK Infighting

¶7. (C) On January 23, we spoke with Zoran Krcmarevic, CCK coordinator for Vitina municipality, about Samardzic's stop there. Krcmarevic is a member of the DS party who was recently appointed to his CCK post as part of a wider reallocation of CCK jobs agreed to by the Serbian parties, DSS, DS, and G17 Plus. Krcmarevic corroborated other reports we have received that despite Samardzic's initial agreement to these new appointments, he has now rejected them and continues to regard former (largely DSS) CCK coordinators as the legitimate representatives of the Ministry for Kosovo in their respective areas. He told us that Samardzic had completely ignored him during his visit to Vitina, and met instead with the former coordinator, a DSS party member.

No new office...for now

¶8. (C) We spoke also with Strpce regional CCK coordinator Sokol Djordjevic on January 23 to inquire about rumors that a new Serbian Ministry for Kosovo office had been opened there. He told us that no new office had been opened, but claimed that the Ministry would do so "very soon."

Meanwhile, in Mitrovica...

¶9. (C) Simultaneous with these developments in southern Kosovo, there are also signs of growing aggressiveness on the part of the hard-line Serb leadership in the north. ICOPT Mitrovica Office international staffer James Nunan reported on January 21 that Serb National Council leader Milan Ivanovic (E.O.-listed) told him that any new EU-led mission in northern Kosovo would be completely unacceptable to Serbs there, who would resist with all possible means. Ivanovic made no distinction between the ICO and ESDP missions, and when pressed, said while he personally did not want to see

PRISTINA 00000046 003 OF 003

any violence, repeated his warning that there would be a violent reception for the new mission. He then explained that after Kosovo declared independence, the northern municipalities would "cement" all parallel structures now in place and separate themselves from the rest of Kosovo.

¶10. (C) Addressing the future of the Kosovo Police Service (KPS) in the north, Ivanovic said that after Kosovo's declaration of independence, the Serb-majority KPS north of the Ibar river would stop operating as part of the overall KPS, and indicated that Serb officers in the north might begin wearing some sort of insignia to differentiate themselves. In addition, he openly told Nunan that he had spoken with the landlord of the ICOPT's office building in an attempt to persuade him to stop renting to the ICOPT. (Note: Nunan later told us that the landlord resisted this pressure, but on January 28, Nunan then reported that an unknown assailant threw a rock through the windshield of the landlord's car on January 25. The KPS is investigating. End Note.) Ivanovic ended the meeting by agreeing to stay in contact in the upcoming period, which is consistent with what he has told us at recent meetings.

Comment

¶11. (C) Belgrade's stepped up pressure on Kosovo Serbs in the run-up to Kosovo independence comes as no surprise but is nonetheless troubling. Samardzic's invective, directed at Kosovo Serb politicians, is an indication of the actions the Ministry for Kosovo is likely to take in the future. Establishment of a fully parallel Kosovo Serb municipal government, especially in the southern Serb enclaves, would be a bold provocation for Kosovo Albanians as well as an open challenge to UNMIK's authority.

¶12. (C) UNMIK has indicated that it will, in response to Samardzic's actions during this last visit, likely prohibit him from entering Kosovo again, a move we should support.

Piecemeal responses, however, are unlikely in the extreme to dissuade Belgrade from pursuing its overall strategy, and consideration will need to be given to more direct measures and messages aimed at Belgrade, in tandem with our European partners. Even the Russians, at least in conversations on the ground with USOP COM, understand the highly provocative quality of some actions currently being contemplated by Belgrade and Kosovo's northern hardliners; while the Russians may use some of their influence to try and prevent actions that could lead to open conflict, they too are unlikely to get a full hearing in Belgrade at a time when the Serbian government appears bent on pursuing a strategy of political confrontation. End comment.

KAIDANOW